**PROJECT NARRATIVE**

**BUILDING THE EDUCATIONAL STRATEGY OF TOMORROW (BEST) PROGRAM**

**PREDOMINANTLY BLACKINSTITUTIONS PROGRAM**

**PROJECT NARRATIVE**

**Overview**

The College of Education of The University of West Alabama (UWA) proposes a ground-breaking program that will strengthen the institution while impacting the poor elementary and secondary education in the predominantly African American community. The schools in the geographic area do not provide the quality of education available in the more economically progressive parts of the state and nation. Students who earn a teaching degree return to the schools with no motivation to change the existing ineffective educational practices. Poor education is a perpetuating cycle that UWA has fought for decades. The solution exists at the very foundation with the quality instruction provided by master teachers. The mission of the Predominantly Black Institutions (PBI) Program is to increase the number of African Americans entering teacher education and becoming master teachers capable of breaking the cycle of poor education provided in the rural schools. The Building the Educational Strategy of Tomorrow (BEST) Program will strengthen the institutions capacity to address the following needs: (1) the poor quality of education provided African American students at the elementary and secondary level; (2) the need to encourage African American students to enter teacher education; (3) the need to provide a program to prepare African American students to become master teachers.

**I. Need for the Project**

The need to prepare African American students of the Black Belt Region to become master teachers who provide a learning environment for the children of the poverty stricken area is evident by the data available. The cycle of poor education is perpetuated by poor quality of classroom instruction.

***a. The magnitude of the needs for the services to be provided or the activities to be carried out by the proposed project.***

Demographics of Targeted Area. The University of West Alabama (UWA) is located within a rural area known as the Black Belt. The area is a segment of the larger [Black Belt Region](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Belt_Region) of the [Southern United States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_South), which stretches from [Texas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Texas) to [Virginia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virginia). This region includes the poorest counties in Alabama and the [United States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_of_America). The name referred originally to the thin layer of exceptionally fertile Black soil which encouraged cotton farming in the pioneer period of Alabama history. Now the descriptive title is mistakenly taken as a reference to the exceptionally high proportion of Black residents in these counties. Major characteristics of Black Belt counties include:

* Proportionally large Black Population
* Highest rates of obesity in state and nation
* Low rates of educational attainment
* Highest levels of poverty in state and nation

The Black Belt Region of Alabama is burdened with an environment that results in a wide range of social, economic, cultural, health, political and physical ills. The area is poor and economically underdeveloped. The demographics reported by the most recent Census Bureau Reports (2005) validate that the area is a poor, rural, undeveloped with low-achieving schools. The proposed project focuses on six Black Belt Counties: Choctaw, Greene, Hale, Marengo, Pickens, and Sumter. The table below depicts demographics of the targeted area.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Choctaw** | **Greene** | **Hale** | **Marengo** | **Pickens** | **Sumter** |
| **Population** | 14,656 | 9,374 | 18,236 | 22,539 | 20,949 | 14,798 |
| **Population of African Americans** | 7,027 | 8,013 | 10,131 | 11,655 | 8,999 | 10,827 |
| **% of African Americans** | 44.2% | 80.3% | 59.0% | 51.7% | 43.0% | 73.2% |
| **Persons below poverty** | 3,858 | 3,391 | 4,531 | 5,805 | 5,161 | 5,611 |
| **Persons below poverty %** | 24.5% | 34.3% | 26.9% | 25.9% | 24.9% | 38.7% |
| **Persons completed high school %** | 65.0% | 64.8% | 65.2% | 71.9% | 69.7% | 64.8% |
| **Persons completed college %** | 9.6% | 10.5% | 8.1% | 12.1% | 9.8% | 12.4% |

Table 1: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census, 2005 Projections

The average family in this poverty stricken, economically undeveloped area is a single, female head-of-household with three children cared for by a grandparent or another elderly relative. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2005), 56% of the children in the area live in single parent families with 60% of children under 18 living with their grandparents. Children do not have chores or responsibilities, and they are burdened with excessive unsupervised free-time. Parents and caregivers are constantly working to meet financial responsibilities, are not able to give their children the proper supervision that is needed. Most residents must commute no less than 20 miles a day in order to secure a job that pays minimum wage. They live in a home worth less than $15,000 with many people. The poverty rates in the six counties, which provide 46% of UWA’s undergraduate enrollment exceed most in the state of Alabama and nation.

Secondary Education: The schools of the six counties targeted typically parallel the demographics. The six county school systems are characterized by high a percentage of students on the free lunch program, high dropout rates, low expenditure per student, low test scores, high rate of uncertified teachers, low passing rate on Graduation Exam, low ACT scores, and low percentage of students attending postsecondary institutions. *Kids Count for Alabama Data Book, 2006* reports thatfive of the six counties were ranked among the 17 worst in the state. The significance of the data represents an ongoing cycle of the poor educational standards in which students have no exposure to a quality education thus the few who complete college and return do not change the existing norm established decades ago.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **SCHOOL SYSTEMS**  **CATEGORY** | **Choctaw County Schools** | **Hale County Schools** | **Greene County Schools** | **Marengo County Schools** | **Pickens County Schools** | **Sumter County Schools** |
| **Enrollment** | 1,979 | 3,144 | 1,467 | 1,531 | 3,145 | 2,416 |
| **%Students on Free or Reduced Lunch** | 77.1% | 73.2% | 91.8% | 85.7% | 67.5% | 92.9% |
| **# of Title 1 Schools** | All | All (7) | All (4) | All ( | All (8) | All (7) |
| **# of Schools in School Improvement** | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| **# of African American Students** | 1,349 | 2,272 | 1,463 | 1,229 | 1,928 | 2,403 |
| **% of African American Students** | 68.17% | 72.27% | 99.72% | 80.27% | 61.3% | 99.46% |
| **% Non-Certified Teachers** | 0.7% | 3.2% | 8.1% | 5.1% | 7.3% | 5.6% |
| **# of Student Graduates** | 128 | 177 | 57 | 101 | 209 | 160 |
| **Drop-Out Rate %** | 17.7% | 17.8% | 12.7% | 8.1% | 7.6% | 5.7% |
| **Average % of Students Passing the Graduation Exam** | 70.1% | 67.5% | 65.9% | 60.7% | 72.1% | 70.1% |

Table 2: Alabama State Department of Education, 2006-07 Data

***b. The extent to which the proposed project will focus on the serving or otherwise addressing the needs of disadvantaged individuals.***

The project will focus totally on meeting the needs of low-income, disadvantaged Black students in two specific ways.

1. The project staff will recruit all participants from the high schools in the six targeted counties described above. The six contiguous counties targeted for the PBI Program account for 46% of the total enrollment. Of the UWA undergraduate enrollment of 1,522 students, 700 students are members of communities where educational deprivation and unskilled labor force have created an economically stagnant area of Alabama. A majority of the students are disadvantaged as documented by the high percentage on free/reduced lunch (73.2% to 92.9%), high percentage of African Americans (61.3% to 99.46%), and the high number of families living below the poverty level (24.5% to 38.7%). Each year of the project, the staff will recruit two cohorts of 12 students (24 per year). It is anticipated that 90% of the students will be disadvantaged. In 2005-2006, the Financial Aid Office reported that of the 1,522 students enrolled at UWA, 1,207 were low-income and/or first generation college students. In addition, 56% were needy based on the College Cost Reduction Access Act of 2007. Of the total enrollment of undergraduate students, over 90% receive some form of financial aid with 62% receiving the Pell Grant. Of the recipients of the Pell Grant, 39% expected a contribution of 0 from the family. The typical student in the targeted area lives below poverty and based on the FAFSA is needy and disadvantaged. Black students recruited from the area will meet the criteria for the BEST Program. The project will focus on the achieving student who is motivated to enter teacher education, viewing teaching as a respected profession.

2. The goal of the PBI Project is to create a program that focuses on teaching a new generation of educators to value excellence and quality. When these teachers return to their community, they will impact many disadvantaged children in elementary and secondary by improving the quality of education provided in the poor schools of the Black Belt Region. Of the 13,682 students in the targeted counties, 10,261 are disadvantaged. It is feasible that 48 master teachers in this deprived situation could directly affect the lives of 1,440 students in the future. The overall effect of improved teaching and learning can have lasting outcomes.

***c. The extent to which specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities have been identified and will be addressed by the proposed project, including the nature and magnitude of those gaps.***

The inadequate educational opportunities of the secondary schools in the six counties surrounding the university do not prepare African American students to succeed or excel at the postsecondary level. The schools face critical issues that create weaknesses directly related to students entering UWA with little preparation. The chances of Black students completing college and becoming successful are low in comparison with their white counterpart from another geographic area as indicated by the completion rates below:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Beginning Year** | **1998 Cohort** | **1999 Cohort** | **2000 Cohort** |
| # of AA Freshmen | 128 | 97 | 138 |
| Graduated in 4 Years | 9 | 9 | 11 |
| Graduated in 5 Years | 18 | 9 | 8 |
| Graduated in 6 + Years | 10 | 3 | 12 |
| Overall Graduate Rate | 29% | 22% | 22.5% |

Office of Institutional Effectiveness, UWA

Analysis of the past data indicates that less than one-fourth of the Black students who enter as freshmen graduate. This alarming data has resulted in the Teacher Education Team identifying specific gaps to address:

(1) Lack of educational preparation. African American students entering UWA as beginning freshmen are not prepared due to inadequate educational background and frequently leave before completion of their freshman and/or sophomore year. In the fall of 2005, of the 359 freshmen, 110 students were enrolled in remedial English (57% Black) and 112 in remedial math (62% Black). A high number of freshmen entering UWA have an ACT composite score of 17 or below with a high percentage admitted conditionally. Research for the proposed project show the following graduation rates of 138 Black freshmen entering in 2000: 11 graduated in four years, 20 graduated in five or more with a graduation rate of 22.5%.

(2) Lack of Educational Experiences. Freshmen entering UWA do have the experience at secondary or elementary levels to choose teacher education as a career choice. The College of Education has a present enrollment of 900 students (412 black), the largest college on campus. Of this number, 66% choose teacher education as a secondary choice during and after their sophomore year. Students entering UWA do not have positive attitudes about education due to the schools they attended. Students need to be motivated to choose teacher education early to assure adequate preparation and success.

(3) The College of Education does not have the resources to establish a program that meets the needs of the Black, disadvantaged student entering as freshmen. The College of Education works closely with Student Support Services and developmental programs. The College does not have resources to recruit students as freshmen and provide motivational and leadership programs that enable them to not only succeed but excel. Presently, students apply and enter teacher education as a junior. By this time, many capable Black students have left college. Beginning early will motivate students to remain in college and succeed.

(4) Entering students from the Black Belt have not been exposed to technology as a teaching/learning tool. Students come to UWA without knowledge or experience in the use of technology and up-to-date pedagogue because the schools in their communities are poor with inadequate funding and accessibility to internet. Teachers in the rural areas of Alabama have little knowledge of the new teaching methodology resulting from technology. UWA proposes to establish the BEST Gathering Room as a totally Smart Classroom and technology center where the BEST FELLOWS will gather and become proficient in all areas of teaching/learning technology. To assure this gap is filled, special events will be conducted similar to science fairs in which students compete using technology in presentation.

(5) African American students entering UWA as freshmen lack the motivation and self-esteem to become successful. Students from the poor areas targeted for this project enter college feeling inadequate. The BEST Program will identify 24 students per year and create a pride and togetherness that will result in highly motivated students. The African American students will have numerous opportunities that will contribute to reaching their full potential. There will be motivational events, mentors, observational trips, and weekly learning sessions. The program will be built on a premise of achievement and pride in a job well done. Each student will receive a red laptop to identify them as BEST Fellows.

(6) The Black Belt Region lacks highly certified teachers and has extreme shortages in Math, Science, and Special Education as validated by non-certified teachers in classrooms. The highly motivational program to identify Black students who can become master teachers will increase the number of certified teachers and address the shortages. Each year 24 highly qualified teachers entering teaching will have a tremendous impact on improving the quality of education.

**II. Quality of the Project Design**

The PBI Project planned by the College of Education of University of West Alabama will impact the quality of teachers graduating from the Teacher Education Program thus impacting the quality of public education in the geographic area. The project directly addresses the purpose of the PBI program by strengthening the College of Education (largest undergraduate college), specifically teacher education while increasing the number of Black students who enroll in teacher education, complete the bachelor’s degree, teacher certification, and highly qualified designation. The project will focus on recruiting motivated, achieving African American students to become teachers while enhancing the capacity of the College of Education to prepare the students to excel as teachers.

The **Building the Education Strategy of Tomorrow** Program is an exciting program that will motivate African American high school students to become teachers by establishing a highly competitive, program in which students are motivated through leadership, teamwork, achievement, and rewards to become a BEST FELLOW. The BEST Program will provide experiences in which students learn from master teachers to take pride in becoming an outstanding teacher. UWA Faculty and successful Black teachers will become role models by interacting with the BEST FELLOWS in on-campus special activities. The students will have the opportunity to learn up-to-date technology through campus learning sessions and informal get-togethers. UWA will establish the BEST Gathering Room as a technology-based resource room in which students explore and discover learning as the road to success. Activities that encourage the best from students will be implemented including competitive individual and team events with rewards. Six high achieving schools in the state will be selected as BEST School Partners with master teachers from each selected to become mentors and presenters. Students will have the opportunity to visit the school partners, observe teachers, and participate in learning activities. Using a selective cohort strategy in which students learn through active participation integrated with rewards for achievement, mentoring, and observation will establish the program as prestigious. The multi-faceted program will blend six components: (1) high school recruitment implemented in six county school systems in the Black Belt Region, (2) participatory enrichment program (BEST Fellows) for freshmen and sophomore cohorts of students, (3) infused technology program and resources, (4) teaching methodology fair for undergraduate students, (5)partnerships with six high-achieving schools and 12 master teacher mentors, and (6) professional development for the faculty team and program director. The components working in unison (*as shown in Figure 1*) will bolster the teacher education program at UWA, increase Black students entering teacher education, especially males, while impacting the quality of education in elementary and secondary schools.

**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION**

**BEST FELLOWS PROGRAM**

High School Senior Program

Summer Institute

Academic Year Activities

Leadership Training

Special Events

BEST School Observations

Teaching with Technology

Teacher Education Fair

**Pedagogy & Methodology**

**INFUSION OF TECHNOLOGY**

***a. The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable.***

The **Goal** of ***Building Educational Strategy for Tomorrow Program*** is to strengthen the capacity and resources of the College of Education to implement a strong, undergraduate teacher education program for low-income, first generation freshmen and sophomore Black students that results in a cadre of master teachers who are motivated and capable of breaking a 200 year-old cycle of poor education in a poor area. The BEST Program is designed to meet the PBI goals and objectives by increasing the enrollment of Black students seeking undergraduate degrees in education by 5% and by increasing the persistence rate of students enrolled as freshmen and continuing after the first year by 10%. The program is designed using the six components as the primary model for implementation (Fig 1). The following objectives and outcomes establish the delivery strategy that will enable students to succeed while impacting the overall educational levels within the community.

BEST Program Objectives and Outcomes

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **OBJECTIVES** | **MEASUREABLE OUTCOMES** |
| 1. To increase the number of African American students who enroll as freshmen at The University of West Alabama to select teacher education as a major. | During the first and second year of the project two cohorts of 12 each (24 total) students will be recruited from local high schools to become Best Fellows. Enrollment will increase by 24 per year, 48 total with 70 % continuing to the advanced program. |
| 2. To establish the BEST FELLOWS Program as a competitive, participatory program of learning activities that prepare students for upper level courses by increasing academic performance and building the desire and motivation to become a master teacher. | Of each cohort of 12 students, 83% will successfully complete the freshmen and sophomore year and participate in a minimum of two activities per week of the BEST Program. The average GPA will increase from 2.5 to 3.0 by the completion of two years in the program. |
| 3. To provide a strong collaborative strategy for the Fellows by building a partnership with six high achieving elementary and high schools to provide a modeling strategy of excellence in teaching as BEST Partners and two teachers per school serving as mentors | Six observation/participatory events each year will enable BEST FELLOWS to experience strong teaching/learning environments and methodology. 12 BEST Teachers presenting on campus once per semester and serving as mentors. |
| 4. To establish a multi-media resource center as the center of the program with up-to-date technology resources related to participatory teaching/learning methodology encouraging exploration, innovative thinking, and discovery. | The BEST Gathering Room completed with the latest in technology, learning devices, related resources, and pedagogue open everyday with a minimum of two activities planned per week. |
| 5. To establish a BEST Teaching Fair to reward students for achievement in developing new and innovative approaches to the teaching/learning process by using technology in the classroom. | Participation of 100% of BEST FELLOWS in developing teaching activities to learn the importance of creative and resourceful teaching pedagogue. |
| 6. To establish an evaluation plan that monitors the progress of the project from beginning to end with specific benchmarks, reporting procedures, documentation, and measurements. | A comprehensive evaluation plan with timelines, outcomes, best practices, and a dissemination plan and a specific feedback process and monitoring system. |

***(b) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs.***

The BEST Project will establish a strong program that will impact Black students living in west Alabama and educational levels of schools. The quality of education provided to students in the rural areas served by the University does not provide the direction or self-esteem students need to succeed. The background is inadequate and commitment lacking so that they are not prepared to face the challenges of college. The proposed project will establish a model program that addresses two very important needs: preparation of students and low-performing public schools.

Students from the six county area, who have achieved academic success in high school, are not prepared for the intellectual environment of college or the responsibilities needed for success. The proposed BEST FELLOWS Program will address these critical deficits by motivating students to develop a strong goal to become a teacher. This will be supported by a multi-faceted program that builds knowledge, competence, and confidence. Students will have support for academic programs through the UWA Student Support Services Program. As a BEST FELLOW, students will participate in leadership training, technology infused programs, mentor programs, and motivational events. They will experience successful schools and master teachers in action as they visit and work closely with partner school and teachers. The outcome will be students completing college and well-prepared to be highly successful in education. The program will build commitment and self-esteem while teaching excellence. The adage that we learn by doing will be the underlying strategy for the BEST FELLOWS Program. Students will become BEST FELLOWS, who will become best teachers at better schools.

Significant to the program is preparing teachers for the future in order to *break the cycle of poor schools in poor areas.* The targeted area has suffered from inadequate schools for decades. By preparing capable students to become master teachers and return to their home schools, the shortage of certified, capable teachers is addressed. More importantly the quality of classroom instruction is improved. Outstanding teachers can impact the quality of education within given schools. The overarching outcome will be improved schools which will spillover into the community and economic development.

**III. Quality of project services.**

**a. The extent to which the services provided by the proposed project are appropriate to the needs of the intended recipients or beneficiaries of those services.**

From the beginning, the BEST Program will identify Black students who can benefit from the program through a strong educational strategy that impact future success. The planned program of services has been designed based on six major components. The components establish a continuum of services that prepare and meet the needs of the participating students, teacher education faculty, project staff, partnering schools, master teachers, and UWA faculty.

**A. High School Component**

The BEST Faculty Team and Program Director will implement a program in the six county high schools to identify and recruit capable students to become BEST FELLOWS. Building strong collaborations with school counselors and teachers will allow the team to identify capable students for the project. The team will visit the school and present programs to encourage students to select teaching as a career and apply for the PBI Program. Programs planned for the schools will be available to all students interested in Teacher Education. Criteria for selection will be developed by the team including GPA requirement, recommendations, and interviews. The selective process will be well executed so that students regard the program as a privilege and honor. The high school program will include the following:

1. Friday Learning Programs: Team members will present monthly programs at the local high schools related to teaching, attending college, and leadership. Junior and senior minority students will be encouraged to participate (participating schools are predominantly Black). Programs will include campus visits and summer programs.

2. Future Teachers Clubs: UWA Department of Teacher Education will work with the targeted schools and designated teachers to establish organizations that promote teaching as a career. All high school students will be encouraged to join.

3. Selection Process: The PBI Faculty Team will establish criteria and selection process for the BEST FELLOWS Program. The program will be publicized with an extensive application process. School counselors and administrators will facilitate the process by encouraging capable students and assisting in the completion of applications.

B. BEST FELLOWSPROGRAM

The most exciting component of the PBI Project is the BEST FELLOWS Program. This component will motivate Black participating students to excel and be the very best. This is an opportunity to become successful teachers and leaders. Through a thorough application/interview process, 24 students from the six high schools targeted will be selected to become BEST Fellows. As entering freshmen, students will participate in a complete program of activities:

1. Summer Orientation Program: Participants will be invited to attend a three day orientation program during the summer prior to the Fall Semester. The special Fellows Program will include leadership training, motivational speakers, technology workshop, and campus orientation. The students will begin to know each other and feel a special identity that fosters success.

2. Weekly Activities: During the Fall and Spring Semesters, participants will attend scheduled activities including technology workshops, tutoring, and teaching orientation seminars each week. Activities will be planned for individual participation with faculty members and graduate students. Students will be encouraged to gather in the Gathering Room for informal discussion led by faculty in subject areas.

3. Saturday BEST Events: A minimum of three Saturday Events will be planned per semester with presentations by Master Teachers. The events will include workshops on using technology, pedagogue, and up-to-date teaching/learning methods.

4. Leadership Training: Special motivations events will be conducted with outstanding Black role models as presenters. This will include local **Black** leaders and highly successful educators.

**C. TECHNOLOGY INFUSED PROGRAM AND RESOURCES**

Basic to the success of the program is the bonding component in which the BEST FELLOWS feel special. The project will combine this element with infusion of technology as primary to the learning process. The rural areas and rural schools do not have the accessibility to technology nor up-to-date resources available in many areas. Many of the participants have grown up without accessibility and everyday use of technology. Major to the initiative is developing the Fellows as technology savvy. The participants will have a total exposure to technology.

1. BEST Gathering Room. UWA will provide space to create the Gathering Room. This will be a technology, meeting, and resource center for the BEST FELLOWS. The area will include up-to-date technology including digital recording, editing, internet, and Smart Classroom interactive capacity. BEST FELLOWS will have the resources available that encourages the total infusion of technology in the teaching/learning process.

2. Laptop Program. The BEST FELLOWS will each receive a laptop computer for use during their college career. The team plans to order computers such as red computers so that they will serve as a special identity as well. UWA Campus is wireless so the laptop will give each fellow total accessibility.

3. Scheduled and Informal Activities. The Gathering Room will be open a minimum of 5 hours per day with a graduate assistant present. The Fellows can use the room for meetings, study, and exploration. Planned weekly activities will be scheduled in the Room, but the primary function is to be a special gathering place for the BEST FELLOWS with resources needed to prepare assignments, socialize, and learn.

D. TEACHER EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY FAIR

Embedded in the BEST FELLOWS Program will be the spirit of competition as a strategy to promote excellence. The Teacher Education Technology Fair will be an annual event sponsored by the PBI Program for all teacher education majors. The Fair will have divisions for all levels including Freshmen, Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors. Special events will include creative learning activities using technology, incorporating technology in the classroom, teaching resources available online, teaching presentations, lesson plans, and video presentations. BEST FELLOWS will be encouraged to participate in a minimum of one event. The Fellows will also present programs and serve as hosts. The event will become an annual occasion in which Teacher Education students can excel and high school students and teachers can visit campus. The Fair will encourage the involvement of the fellows, faculty, and all teacher education students. The BEST Technology Fair will foster excellence and reward outstanding teaching/learning activities.

E. BEST School Partnerships

The BEST Faculty Team will select and partner with six schools throughout the state. Secondary and elementary schools will be selected based on academic performance ratings awarded by the State of Alabama Department of Education and success as high achieving schools. The UWA Faculty Team will strive to locate and partner with schools that are rural with similar demographics as the rural schools in the Black Belt Region. The primary difference will be the level of academic performance and quality of instruction.

1. Partner School Activities. A major component of the project is to identify the partner schools and plan observation and participatory activities for the BEST FELLOWS. The purpose is to expose the students to positive teaching/learning environments in which students are encouraged to excel. The BEST FELLOWS will visit each school with each Fellow making two visits per semester. Students will have planned observations in fields of interest (majors). Teachers will be asked to involve the BEST FELLOWS in activities that promote strong pedagogue.

2. Master Teachers. Two teachers from each school will be asked to serve as Master Teachers each year of the project. The master teachers will visit the UWA Campus for Special Saturday Events as presenters. The teachers will be ask to present programs that illustrate strong teaching methodology and integrate technology. BEST FELLOWS will be assigned to the master teachers based on interests and major subject areas for a mentoring relationship.

F. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional Development will include four areas: program implementation workshops for BEST Faculty Team, up-to-date teaching methodology, programs for UWA faculty, and programs for high school teachers.

1. Training in PBI Implementation. The Faculty Team and administrator will participate in quarterly workshops related to implementing the project. Training will be provided in planning activities, implementing, documenting, and evaluating the project. The team will meet monthly for day-to-day planning and to solve any immediate issues. The Office of Sponsored Programs will conduct workshops on evaluation, documentation, and data analysis so that the team can measure progress and make revisions when needed.

2. Up-to-Date Methodology. BEST Faculty Team members will attend one workshop per year to update pedagogue and technology skills. The members must be competent in the latest methods in order to prepare the Fellows to excel in teaching.

3. High School Teachers. BEST Faculty Team will present programs in the local high schools as a strategy to help teachers improve and promote teacher education. Programs will be presented each semester in the targeted schools. Teachers will benefit as well as students and the university.

4. Presentation for UWA Faculty. The Project Director will conduct programs for Departments in which students enroll for major subject areas. Faculty will be encouraged to become involved through discussion groups and special support for the BEST FELLOWS.

**b. The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project reflect up-to-date knowledge from research and effective practices.**

The BEST Program supports the use of the most up-to-date technology and teaching methods. The program is based on a strong delivery strategy that is both research based and based on best practices from successful programs. The project integrates the total development of the student fostering the success of the student and the impact of the project.

1. High School Component: This component uses best practices of Community

Outreach and research data from the Alabama Department of Education. Involving

the school counselors and administrators promote ownership of the program

assuring their support. .

1. BEST FELLOWS Program: The primary component integrates proven theories and research. Success of selective process, competition, and peer pressure are well established. Using the selective theory, students build self-esteem and the desire to succeed. Giving the BEST FELLOWS their unique identity with a special name, special place, laptops, activities, and special events creates a pride and confidence. Best practices including leadership training, presentations, and technology build the competency levels needed for success.
2. TECHNOLOGY INFUSED PROGRAM AND RESOURCES: The use of the most up-to-date technology as a component of the teaching/learning process has proven to increase performance and learning. Teachers who use computers and/or have been exposed to the use of technology are more likely to incorporate them in the classroom. The premise of the BEST Project is to provide training for the students so that technology is a very natural part of teaching. Technology for the student of today is mandated because it is a part of everyday life.
3. TEACHER EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY FAIR: In order to validate competition and reward as primary motivators, one need only watch the latest sports channel on television. Competition is a part of the American Spirit. The teacher education fair will promote the need of students to excel and achieve. Being the BEST is a strong link to success and achievement.
4. BEST SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS: Collaborating with school partners and identifying master teachers will reinforce the practice that successful teachers emulate their best teachers. Since many of the BEST FELLOWS have not experienced excellence and master teaching, they will learn pedagogue from observing and assisting outstanding teachers. Student will have outstanding role models to emulate.
5. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: Proving training for the faculty team in program implementation will contribute to the success of the overall project. The faculty will assist with the project activities thus there is a need for each to remain up-to-date in their own knowledge and teaching skills. Evaluating the ongoing progress and making revisions when needed is accomplished by created a strong team approach and network of the implementation team with ongoing professional development.

**IV. Quality of Project Personnel**

***a. The qualifications, including relevant training and experience of the project director or principal investigator. (Vita included)***

Dr. Martha Hocutt will serve as principal investigator and project administrator. She is Dean of the College of Education with outstanding qualifications and experience. Her experience included all levels of public schools including elementary and middle school. Dr. Hocutt is fully certified teacher with a Master’s in Elementary Education and Doctorate in Instructional Leadership. Her instructional experience at postsecondary level includes Technology and Education, Curriculum, and Methodology. She is a resident of the community and is very knowledgeable of the area with strong ties to the local schools and leadership. Her area of expertise in the classroom includes the use of technology as a learning tool as reflected by her publications. Also, Dr. Hocutt has extensive experience in Federal and State program implementation and administration (See Vita)

***b. The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel. (Vitae attached)***

Project Director. The day-to-day management of the project will be accomplished by the project director. The Director will have extensive teaching and project experience with knowledge of the targeted community. The individual will have strong leadership traits and be a highly motivated self-starter. It is essential that the individual working directly with the students on a daily basis be an outstanding role model. (Job Description Included) The project will include a faculty team of three members who will work with the project throughout the grant. The team will work fulltime during the summers and participate on weekends. The team will plan the weekly activities including workshops on technology, teaching resources, and teaching pedagogue. The team will also provide leadership in the development of the Teacher Education Fair. The BEST Faculty Team includes Dr. Diann Richardson, Dr. Beth Gibbs, and Dr. B.J. Kimbrough. All team members are highly respected and very knowledgeable in the area of teacher education. All team members will visit the high schools, provide professional development, and recruit students for the program. Each member has a special expertise to contribute to the project. (Vitae included as attachment)

Dr. Diann Richardson has over 30 years teaching experience with a doctorate in Educational Leadership. She presently teaches courses in educational technology and methodology. Her experience includes numerous projects related to resource and curriculum development for school systems in Alabama and Mississippi. She is lifetime resident of the community having supervised interns in the local schools. She will bring experience in working with the local schools and expertise in planning activities related to curriculum. Dr Richardson will conduct workshops for students and high school teachers.

Dr. Beth Gibbs will bring a special expertise in the use of technology in the classroom. She has worked with three of the local school systems in the past two years to develop technology plans and provide assistance in locating resources. Workshops on technology and Online Resources will be her special area for the project. This will be provided for high school teachers and the participating students. Her doctoral work is in instructional technology.

Dr. B.J. Kimbrough brings a special expertise to the project as a program presenter and recruiter of youth. She identifies easily with young persons and immediately becomes a role model. She will lead the recruiting efforts and plan many events in leadership for the BEST Program. Dr. Kimbrough has experience teaching at the elementary level and holds a master’s in elementary education with a doctorate in educational leadership.

**V. Adequacy of Resources (See Budget Narrative)**

***a. The extent to which the budget is adequate to support the proposed project.***

The budget totals $564,823 for year one and %487,711 for year two. The budget will provide adequate funding for the activities and lay a strong framework for the program to continue after funding period. Funding includes the following that will significantly contribute to the success of the program:

* Stipends for BEST Fellows
* Presenters for Special Saturdays
* Master Teacher Presenters
* Laptops for BEST Fellows
* Observations at BEST School Partners
* Professional Development for Faculty Team
* Renovation of facility as BEST Gathering Room
* Summer assistance for the BEST Faculty Team
* Visits to local high schools.

UWA is supportive of the PBI Project and will provide facilities and support of the College of Education. Other faculty members in subject areas will be encouraged to become involved.

***b. The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the project.***

The total of direct costs of the project is $974,568. The amount is reasonable to implement a program that could impact the low performance levels of six schools systems in one of the poorest areas of the nation. Importantly, the project will directly motivate and inspire 48 Black students to excel in their careers. The BEST FELLOWS could serve as a role model for student in the future thus the ramifications are truly immeasurable. Events are planned that will also directly affect all student enrolled as teacher education students (over 900 students) through the Teacher Education Fair and related special events. The impact is immeasurable and it exemplifies that a mind is a terrible thing to waste.

**VI. Quality of the management plan.**

**a. The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.**

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| **BEST PROGRAM MANAGEMENT PLAN** | | | | | |
| **Timeline\* Beg-End** | **Tasks/Activities** | **Person Responsible** | **Budget\*\*** | | **Milestones** |
| **Initial Implementation Process** | | | | | |
| Fall, 2008 | 1) Publicity on Grant Announcement | Dr. M. Hocutt | 22,596 | | Grant Award |
| Fall, 2008 | 2) Hire Project Director | Dr. Hocutt, Faculty Team | 138,240 | | Director hired. |
| Fall, 2008 | 3) Initial Training for BEST Faculty Team |  | 11,000 | | Training of Team |
| **Component A: High School Recruitment** | | | | | |
| Oct., 2008, 2009 | 1. Visits six high schools, relationship building | Project Director | 7,300 | | Relationships with 6 schools |
| Oct-Nov, 2008  Ongoing | 2) Start Future Teachers Organization for high school students at 6 high schools. | Director and Faculty Team | 8,868 | | Future teacher organizations in high schools |
| Oct., 2008 | 3) Develop criteria and recruiting process for BEST Fellows | Director and Faculty Team | 2,215 | | Process in place for BEST Fellows selection. |
| Jan., 2009 | 4) Implement BEST Fellows Program selection process | Director and Faculty Team | 8,868 | | First selection process |
| Feb.-April, 2009 (& 2010) | 5) Professional Development for teachers at high schools | Faculty Team | 6653 | | Professional development for hs teachers |
| Mar., 2009- May, 2010 | 6) Friday Learning Programs | Director and Faculty Team | 2,215 | | Monthly Special programs at high school |
| **Component B: BEST Fellows Program** | | | | | |
| April, 2009  April, 2010 | 1) Selection of First Cohort of BEST Fellows | Director and Faculty Team | 120,000 | | First Cohort of BEST Fellows |
| May, 2009  May, 2010 | 2) Public information and awards | Project Director, Dr. Hocutt | n/a | | Public Announcement of Fellows |
| Summer, 2009 & 2010 | 3) Summer Orientation Program | Director and Faculty Team | 67,000 | | Students prepared to begin college (24) |
| Aug., 2009 &  Aug., 2010 | 4) Registration for classes with special advisory of Faculty Team (Team Members and Teacher Education Faculty assigned BEST Fellows as permanent advisee) | Director and Faculty Team | 2,215 | | Advisory team for BEST Fellows |
| Aug, 2009  Ongoing | 5) Weekly Activities ( discussions, study sessions, workshops, tech. activities, teaching/learning activities) | Project Director | 8,868 | | Ongoing activities for fellows. |
| Oct., 2008-2010 | 6) Ongoing monitoring of progress by Director and Team | Project Director | n/a | | Outcomes of student progress |
| Jan., 2009-2010 | 7) Saturday BEST Events | Director and Faculty Team | 26,400 | | Leadership training for fellows |
| Jan., 2009-2010 | 8) Small group support session based on special needs | Project Director | 8,868 | | Fellows succeeding in college |
| **Component C. Technology Infused Programs and Resources** | | | | | |
| Fall, 2008 | 1) Renovation of Gathering Room | Project Director, Facilities Dtr. | | 75,000 | BEST Gathering Room in place. |
| Jan., 2009 | 2) Equipping Gathering Room with technology equipment and resources | Project Director | | 150,000 | Gathering Room equipped with tech accessibility |
| Aug., 2009 & 2010 | 3) Laptop Computers for BEST Fellows | Project Director | | 59,520 | Tech Access for each fellow. |
| 2009-2011 | 4) Technology Workshops and Online Resource Programs | Dr. Gibbs | | 11,595 | Competency of fellows in technology |
| Aug.2009- May, 2011 | 5) Informal gatherings and discussions | Director and Faculty Team | | 2,215 | Spirit of excellence |
| **Component D: Teacher Education Technology Fair** | | | | | |
| Spring, 2009, 2010, 2011 | 1) Schedule and plan special events and criteria for TE Fair (organize TE Fair Committee) | Director and Faculty Team | 2,215 | | Plans for TE Fair |
| Jan., 2009. 2010, 2011 | 2) Publicize fair at UWA, faculty, and schools, meet with departments to encourage including science, math, physical education, fine arts, language arts | Project Director | n/a | | Interest and participation in fair. |
| Spring, 2010, 2011 | 3) Assist BEST Fellows in project for TE Fair | Faculty Team and Teacher Education Faculty | 4,434 | | Projects completed of BEST Fellows |
| Spring, 2009, 2010, 2011 | 4) Plan related events to involve outstanding master teachers, administrators, and role models | Project Director | n/a | | Presentation and discussions with master teachers. |
| Spring, 2009, 2010, 2011 | 5) Conduct the Friday and Saturday TE Fair and programs | Project Director | 20,400 | | Annual TE Fair |
| **Component E: BEST School Partnerships** | | | | | |
| Spring, 2009 | 1) Selection of 5-6 BEST Schools as partners with assistance from AL Dept of Education and UWA faculty | Director and Faculty Team | n/a | | BEST School Partnerships |
| Spring, 2009 | 2) Contact and visit schools to establish partnerships and identify master teachers (subject areas and elementary ) | Project Director | n/a | | Strong network of schools and master teachers |
| Summer, 2009,2010 | 3) Orientation meeting at UWA of master teachers and administrators | Project Director | 8,000 | | Preparation of master teachers |
| Fall, 2009-2011 | 4) Schedule visits for Year One and Year Two, plan related activities | Project Director | n/a | | Schedule prepared |
| Fall, 2009-May, 2011 | 5) Complete visits and related activities of BEST Fellows | Project Director | 96,110 | | 6 visits per year to partner schools, 12 in year two |
| Dec., 2009, May, 2010 | 6) Follow-up activities of Fellows at UWA | Project Director | n/a | | Learning journal of teaching experiences |
| **Component F. Professional Development** | | | | | |
| Sept., 2008 | 1) Orientation of Faculty Team on implementation plan | Office of Sponsored Programs | 2,215 | | Prepared Faculty Team |
| Oct., 2008 | 2) Planning sessions of director and team to establish schedules and plan of activities | Project Director **,** Dr. M. Hocutt | 8,868 | | Plans for Year One and then Year Two |
| Fall, 2009-2011 | 3) Monthly meetings of Team to organize activities and evaluate progress, solve problems | Director and Faculty Team | 4,434 | | Identify problems and measure progress |
| Fall, 2009-2011 | 4) Quarterly Planning Meetings of Team | Director and Faculty Team | 4,434 | | Compilation of data |
| Fall, 2009-2011 | 5) Presentations to colleges at UWA to inform and involve in activities | Project Director | n/a | | Informed UWA faculty |
| **Program Evaluation** | | | | | |
| Fall, 2008 | 1) Establish evaluation design to measure formative and summative outcomes. | Project Director, Dr. Hocutt, Office of Sponsored Programs | 6,400 | | Evaluation design |
| Jan., 2009 | 2) Setup documentation and data collection for ongoing progress reports | Project Director | n/a | | System of data collection |
| Oct., 2008-2010 | 3) Compile monthly reports and compare with project timelines and objectives. | Project Director | n/a | | Monthly progress reports |
| Ongoing | 4) Maintain all data as ongoing activity. | Project Director | n/a | | Documentation on all activities |
| Ongoing | 5) Compile annual and closeout reports | Project Director, Office of Sponsored Programs, Dr. Hocutt | n/a | | Annual reports |
| Ongoing | 6) Dissemination and reporting of results. | Project Director **,** Dr. M. Hocutt, Faculty Team | 8,868 | | Presentations to national and regional meetings |

\* TIMELINE IS BASED ON AWARD IN OCTOBER, 2008 WITH FIRST COHORT OF STUDENT SELECTED SPRING, 2009. To be adjusted with definite dates.

\*\* BUDGET AMOUNTS ARE ESTIMATES OF ALLOCATIONS TO SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES, N/A DESIGNATES INCLUDED IN SALARY OF DIRECTOR.

**b. The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.**

The evaluation design is based on the ongoing collection of data and monitoring all activities. The project director will collect and compile data on a monthly, quarterly, and annual basis including monitoring the progress of each participant. Each activity will be evaluated using surveys and input discussions of the faculty and participants. Faculty team and selected advisors will maintain progress reports on all participants. Monthly and quarterly meetings of the faculty team will analyze the data, monitor progress based on timeline, and revise program components as needed. Feedback and continuous improvement will be an integral part of the implementation process.

**c. The adequacy of mechanism for ensuring high-quality products and services from the proposed project.**

The BEST Program will focus on all components being of the highest quality. The project design includes partner schools with high academic performance ratings and master teachers with high success rates. The project mechanism includes the following components including as a strategy to focus on excellence:

* Selective process for BEST Fellows
* Up-to-date technology and resources
* Master teachers
* High performance schools
* Well qualified, motivated faculty team
* Well qualified, motivated project director
* Workshops and special events emphasizing excellence
* Professional development and training for all faculty and teachers

**VII. Quality of Project Evaluation**

The BEST Program is designed to establish a highly structured series of events to affect the recruitment, induction, and retention of African American male and female twelfth grade students into the teacher education program at the University of West Alabama. The intent is to prepare future teachers for the six counties in the project area. The project is structured around six objectives and each objective is measured qualitatively and quantitatively to ensure maximum assessment. The evaluation of participants will begin when the project starts (one semester prior to students’ enrollment at UWA) and will be continuous for the duration of the project. The program evaluation will be continuous, with the Director of Sponsored Program serving as technical assistant to provide expertise and to assure that the project remains on schedule and that data is collected and interpreted properly. The project will be monitored on a monthly, quarterly, and annual schedule to determine outcomes and areas of needing revision.

**a. The extent to which the methods of evaluation are thorough, feasible and appropriate to the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the proposed project.**

Evaluation will determine the following by using both formative and summative methodology: (1) Extent to which the tasks outline in the schedule are completed in a timely manner, (2) Extent to which the objectives have been accomplished, (3) Extent to which the project has met intended increases in enrollment and persistence rates of participants, and (4) The extent to which the project has retained internal consistency and integrity.

**b. The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.**

The formative evaluation is primarily qualitative and analyzes the on-going success of the participants based on their reflections and portfolios. Students will also engage in cohort activities which will be observed by the director and other project members in anecdotal records. Quantitative assessments of students will be grade-point averages and surveys. Summative evaluation involves the compilation of data to determine achievement of the project goals and objectives at the end of the project, including annual and final reports. The proposed evaluation design is a thorough system of monitoring activities and participants’ success. Data will be collected and maintained from participants, project staff, mentors from participating schools, speakers, and UWA instructors and professors in participants’ courses, according to the project timeline.

Formative evaluation will monitor whether the project is proceeding according to the timeline, whether the project resources are used effectively, and whether there is proper provision of information (summative data by semester) for changes and improvements.

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| **Objectives** | **Measurable Outcomes** | **Measurements** |
| 1. To increase the number of African American students who enroll as freshmen at the University of West Alabama and select education as a major. | 1. During the first and second year of the project two cohorts of 12 participants each (24 per year) will be recruited from local high schools to become BEST Fellows. Enrollment will increase by 24 per year. | 1. Applications by participants (with 3 references) submitted from each of six counties in the geographical area for each cohort. Participants will be raising graduates from high school, will have appropriate GPA’s and ACT scores to enter UWA. (Support for those needing academic assistance will be provided by the Student Success program.) |
| 2. To establish the BEST FELLOWS Program as a competitive, participatory, program of learning activities that prepare students for upper level courses in education by increasing academic performance and building the desire and motivation to become a master teacher (HQT). | 2. Of each cohort of 12 students, 83% will successfully complete the freshman and sophomore years and participate in a minimum of two activities per week of the BEST Program. The average GPA will increase from 2.5 to 3.0-3.5 by the completion of two years in the program. | 2. Measurements will include:   * GPA’s for each semester; * Participation rosters; * Surveys; * Use of BEST facilities; * Journals; * Live Text portfolios; * Reflections; * Recommendations by UWA personnel on attendance and academic performance. * Anecdotal records by BEST Program Staff |
| 3. To provide a strong collaborative strategy for the BEST FELLOWS by building partnerships with six high achieving elementary and high schools to provide a model strategy of excellence in teaching as BEST Partners and two teachers from each school to serve as mentors | 3. Six observations/participatory events per semester to enable BEST FELLOWS to experience strong teaching/learning environments and instructional methodology. 12 BEST Teachers presenting on campus once per semester and serving as mentors and presenters. | 3. Attendance at events will be monitored and participants will submit journal reflections on observations and other participatory events. Participants will also complete a survey on each event. Portfolio assignments will correlate observations and participation with student learning.  BEST Teachers will assess their presentations and students’ participation.  BEST Staff will provide anecdotal records of events. |
| 4. To establish a multi-media resource center as the central meeting place of the program with current technology resources related to participatory teaching/learning methodology encouraging exploration, innovative thinking, and discovery. | 4. The BEST Gathering Room, complete with the latest in technology, learning devices and software, related resources, and pedagogy will be open every day with a minimum of two activities planned per week. | 4. Evaluation will include sign-in rosters, program evaluations, and anecdotal records by staff. Graduate assistance will be trained to provide assistance. |
| 5. To establish a BEST Teaching Fair to reward students for achievement in developing new and innovative approaches to the teaching/learning process by using technology in the classroom. | 5. Participation of 100% of BEST FELLOWS in developing teaching activities to learn the importance of creative and resourceful teaching pedagogy. | 5. Participants project submissions will be evaluated by BEST Staff and judges according to specific rubrics developed to support the BEST Teaching Fair. |
| 6. To establish an evaluation plan that monitors the progress of the project from beginning to end with specific benchmarks, reporting procedures, documentation, and measurements. | 6. A comprehensive evaluation plan with timeline, outcomes, and specific measurements/rubrics will be maintained for the duration of the project; participants will be monitored during the last two years of their education program to provide a longitudinal study of their performance. | 6. Formative evaluation will include participants’ successful completion of each stage of the project (semester by semester):  GPA’s, portfolios, reflections, surveys, program participation, journals, and other documents as required by BEST Staff.  Summative evaluation will examine the program on a continuous basis for monitoring and improvement. |

**c. The extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible.**

The purpose of the evaluation design is the completion of the annual report and final report for the Predominantly Black Institutions Program based on the Government Performance and Results Act. The summative data will address Goal 5: Enhance the Quality of and Access to Postsecondary and Adult Education. Data will be compiled quarterly and annually to monitor progress throughout the grant period. The timeline has specific milestones to measure the progress by the completion of each activity and component to determine its impact and success. The final report will be a documentary of the data collected to determine if students maintained appropriate GPA’s and remained in school. Significantly, the effect of the project will be based on the goal of the PBI Program to strengthen the capacity of the institution to serve minority students from low-income, disadvantaged backgrounds in order to improve student success and provide high-quality educational opportunities for students. This will be measured by the following quantitative assessments:

(1) Increase enrollment of minority students at predominantly Black institution measured by the number of full-time degree-seeking undergraduates enrolled at UWA by 5% per year, specifically in the teacher education program.

(2) Increase in the persistence rate by 10% for minority students enrolled at UWA by an increase in the percentage of full-time undergraduate, teacher education students who complete the first year and enroll in the second year. This will be determined by a compilation of surveys, observations, program implementation, student participation, successful course completion. The basic summative evaluation will determine if the program accomplishes the stated measurements and effectively improves the capacity of the institution to serve Black students enrolled in teacher education. The project director and faculty team will monitor data monthly and quarterly to determine progress and assure a sound feedback system is in place.

Selected measurements to provide qualitative evaluation are similar to those used in the NCATE-approved education program at UWA. There is also a cycle of continuous assessment in place to meet Alabama State Department of Education standards, and students must obtain specific grades on the class assignments that are required to meet these standards. Materials submitted to the portfolio are evaluated by rubrics developed by instructors who teach the courses. A system of surveys already exists and any surveys for this project would become part of the UWA Continuous Assessment database. Each measurement is designed to insure that the goals and objects of the project are accomplished and is supported by sound assessment principles both quantitative and qualitative.